

The Safe-Home Programme

St. Brendan's Village, Mulranny, Co. Mayo

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From the Chairman's Desk

Greetings,

Good news after all. As we come to the fifth anniversary of the arrival of the IMF in Dublin to mark the commencement of the troika bailout, we hear that unemployment in this State has fallen to below 9% for the first time since December 2008. Unemployment was 15.1% at its peak. More good news for those attending the Global Irish Economic Forum at Dublin Castle earlier this month with confirmation of 1,100 people returning to work every week and a new school building program to commence promising even more jobs. Our emigrants are invited to come home and take advantage of these new job opportunities.

The other side of the coin is rural Ireland where the general lack of job opportunities and poor broadband with government cutbacks are reflected in increasing loss of essential rural services. Besides the closed post offices and Garda stations rural communities are losing their local medical general practitioners whose practices have been rendered unviable. There are 20 areas where the permanent GP is already lost.

Good news also for those who can get the flu shot. Even with the new super bug bacteria emerging in Chinese pig farms, which are proving resistant to every known antibiotic, if you can avoid the flu altogether you will of course avoid the complicating pneumonias. The onset of the cold weather will mean a big increase in pneumonia in older and debilitated people who will require antibiotics. If those bugs causing the pneumonia are resistant to the available antibiotics then such respiratory illnesses may well prove fatal for those who develop them. A good tip for those who already suffer from chronic illness such as asthma and bronchitis, and diabetes, and who are over 65 years is to make sure to get their annual flu jab from their GP and check their pneumococcal vaccine status. Taking this simple step will save countless lives. A stitch in time saves nine!

It's terrible about all the shootings in Paris and Mali. Refugees are going to find it even harder to get safe haven and bombings will continue in Syria and Iran. All peace loving Muslims are shocked as we all are.

Let's face it. There was always trouble in the world and there will always be. Yet life goes on as before. Good things happen also but such equally newsworthy happenings won't even be reported. So let's enjoy the moment and appreciate being alive and able to witness the changing seasons and the onset of spring and summer. In the meantime there's Christmas with good cheer and mistletoe. Don't forget to look in on that older neighbour in these cold short days of winter. God bless for now and keep warm,

Dr. Jerry Cowley - Chairman, Safe Home

Do you still wish to receive our Newsletter?

We are currently reviewing and up-dating our mailing lists for the monthly newsletter. There is a considerable cost involved in the production and postage each month so we want to ensure that it gets sent out to people who are genuinely interested in receiving it.

I'm sure you will appreciate that it would be very difficult for us to contact all of the current recipients directly (approx 1000 people/agencies etc).

We are therefore asking anyone who wishes to receive the newsletter on an on-going basis to contact us to confirm this.

If we don't hear from you by **25th January 2016**, we will assume that you no longer wish to receive a copy. We will phase out circulation to anyone who hasn't contacted us by then.

Important Notes!

1. All active Safe Home housing applicants will continue to receive the newsletter
2. In early 2016, it is our intention to develop a separate quarterly e-bulletin to circulate to all Irish Welfare & Advice Agencies/Funding bodies etc. in early 2016. We will provide more information on this over the coming months.

As always, Safe Home welcomes any comments or feedback that people may have about the newsletter, so please do feel free to contact us.

Housing Opportunity:



This Housing Association in **Aghamore, Co. Mayo** (close to Ballyhaunis and near to Knock Airport) has a one bedroom house available.

This scheme is set in a small rural village so the property is most likely to suit people who can drive or those with family in the area.

Preference will be given to people originally from Co. Mayo or with strong family links there.

Please contact the Safe Home office for more information.

GP Visit Card Over 70s

From 5th August 2015, everyone aged 70 or over, who is ordinarily resident in Ireland, was deemed eligible for free GP care, **regardless of their income.**

What does Ordinarily Resident mean? Ordinarily resident means that you are living in Ireland and intend to live in Ireland for more than one year.

What services are provided under the GP Visit Card over 70s? Once your registration is completed and you have been accepted by your GP of choice to his/her patient panel you can attend your GP of choice, without charge.

Registering for the scheme: Existing Medical Card or GP Visit Card Holders **do not** have to register for this scheme.

Non-Medical Card or GP Visit Card holders can register online at;
www.gpvisitcard.ie

What information do I need to register online?

Your Public Personal Services (PPS) number

- The name of your GP of choice
- Your spouse or partner's Public Personal Services (PPS) number (if applicable).

Will my spouse or my partner also get for a GP Visit Card? If your spouse or partner is aged 70 or over, they can also register for a GP Visit Card online at www.gpvisitcard.ie If your spouse or partner is **under 70**, they will **not qualify** for eligibility under the GP Visit Card Over 70s scheme.

Do I need to change my GP? Provided your GP of choice has a current GMS contract you do not need to change your GP. If your GP does not hold a current GMS contract you will need to register with another GP who is participating in the GMS scheme, to avail of this service.

Will Home Visits by my GP be covered? Yes, home visits are covered. G.P's will make decisions on the need for a home visit based on assessment of individual cases presented.

How do I get help with the registration process?

Visit your Health Centre or nearest Citizens Information Centre

OR Tel: 1890 252 919 (Ireland only) Monday - Friday 8am to 8pm.

THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

**Were you involved in the UK construction industry between 1993 and 2009?
Do you think you were refused work on UK construction sites in those years?**

The Consulting Association (TCA) holds records of over 3,000 names of people who may have been affected. Information held on these records and individual data cards may have resulted in people being turned down for employment. The companies now recognise that the activities of TCA were unacceptable and they regret their involvement.

The Construction Workers Compensation Scheme (TCWCS) is now trying to reach as many people as possible so they can be compensated.

There is no cost to apply and the scheme is designed to be fast, fair, easily accessible and a genuine alternative to going to court. If you think you have a claim, **the first step is to establish whether your name appears in TCA records:** You can fill in an enquiry form online: **www.tcwcs.co.uk**

Write to:

CWCS, Broadspire, 249 Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes MK9 1YA

Phone: 0800 980 8337 Mon-Fri 9:00am-5:00pm

Closing date: 30th June 2016

UK Benefit and Compensation Schemes: Construction Industry

Building and Construction Scheme; Men and women who worked in the construction industry and were properly registered (paying tax & National Insurance) may have paid into this particular scheme and could be due a payment. It applies specifically to those who worked in construction in the UK between the following dates:
April 1982 – April 2001

To find out more, Tel: **Phone No: 0300 200 0444 (UK)**
From Ireland: 00 44 300 200 0444

Details to have to hand when you call;

- * Name and British address when last worked in UK
- * Date of birth
- * British National Insurance No.
- * Last employer in UK

Postal Address:

B&CE Benefit Schemes, Manor Royal, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 9QP

Thank you to Deirdre (Outreach Advice Worker) at Irish Women Survivors Support Network in Manchester for alerting us to the above.

Fuel Allowance Entitlement

Transfer of UK Winter Fuel Payment (WFP);

Up to 2012, the transfer of this payment only applied to Irish people who were already in receipt of the WFP before leaving the UK.

However, following a ruling by the European Court of Justice in 2012, the qualifying criteria can now be extended to returned Irish people who worked all their lives in the UK but did not avail of the allowance when living there.

This significant ruling meant that eligible Irish people who did not apply for the payment before leaving the UK could now claim while living in Ireland **IF** they meet the qualifying criteria.

To be eligible for this fuel payment, the claimant must be born on or before July 5th, 1951 and have a 'genuine and sufficient link' with the UK. Having a British Pension is not a strict qualifying factor but of course, it will be of enormous help when applying.

You can't claim Winter Fuel Payment for 2015 to 2016 after 31 March 2016.

Claim for the first time by phone: **Tel: 03459 15 15 15 (UK)**

Telephone from outside the UK: **+44 (0)191 218 7777**

Fuel Allowance in Ireland;

A Fuel Allowance is paid to people who are dependent on long-term social welfare payments and who are unable to provide for their own heating needs. Only one Fuel Allowance is paid to a household. Applicants must be in receipt of a qualifying welfare payment and satisfy a means test.

Fuel Allowance is paid from October to April each year (approx 26 weeks). It was announced in the recent budget that from January 2016, the weekly rate will increase from €20 to €22.50.

Means test for Fuel Allowance: The Fuel Allowance means test is linked to the maximum rate of the State Pension (Contributory). You can have a combined weekly income of €100 above the maximum State Pension (Contributory) for your situation and still be eligible for a Fuel Allowance.

Getting a pension or benefit from another country: If you are getting a pension/benefit or equivalent payment from a country covered by EU Regulations or a country with which Ireland has a Bilateral Social Security Agreement (provided there is an equivalent Irish payment), you may qualify for a Fuel Allowance provided you satisfy the qualifying conditions **and** you are:

- Resident in Ireland **And** Aged 66 or over
Or under 66 and getting an Invalidity Pension (for over 12 months), a Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Pension or an equivalent payment from another country.

Frequently Asked Question: If I move back to Ireland, can I get the UK Winter Fuel Payment and the Irish Fuel Allowance?

Yes, if you satisfy the qualifying conditions attached to both.

Getting rid of the small change!

Ireland's rounding initiative which aims to reduce the use of 1 cent and 2 cent coins came into effect at the end of October. Some 2,454,465,931 1 cent and 2 cent coins have been issued in Ireland since the introduction of the euro, with a total value of €37 million. The cost of producing these small coins exceeds their face value - a 1 cent coin costs 1.65 cent to produce while a 2 cent coin costs 1.94 cent.

The rounding will only apply to cash payments with the total amount of any bill being rounded up or down to the nearest 5 cent mark. Rounding will be conducted on a voluntary basis while 1 cent and 2 cent coins will remain legal tender. Changes on a total bill will be rounded up or down to the nearest five cent on transactions, for example:

- A transaction of €10.21 or €10.22 will be rounded to €10.20
- A transaction of €10.23 or €10.24 will be rounded to €10.25
- A transaction of €10.26 or €10.27 will be rounded to €10.25

Participation is voluntary so customers will still be entitled to ask for exact change.

The launch of the roll-out has led to some charities to come up with the good fundraising idea of asking people to donate their hoarded 1 cent and 2 cent coins to their preferred worthy cause.

And Finally..... Thanks to **Laurence in Castleblaney** for contacting us with the information that High Street in Ardee (Co. Louth) is the only street in Ireland with a castle on both ends, very posh indeed!

As always if you wish to contact us:

Tel: 098 36036

Tel: 00 353 98 36036 (UK)

Tel: 011353 98 36036 (USA)

Email: info@safehomeireland.com

Office opening times:

Mon – Thurs 9am -5pm

Friday – 9am - 4pm

Write to: The Safe Home Programme, St Brendan's Village, Mulranny, Co Mayo, Ireland.

Slán agus Beannacht,

Dr. Cowley, Karen, Mary Ann, Brenda & Noreen

**The Safe Home Programme is supported by The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
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AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁLA NA hÉIREANN
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF IRELAND